

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4468

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 5321

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MX

SUBJECT: UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS: CARDINAL AIRLINES CONTRACT

1. JOSEPH PRENDERGAST, PRESIDENT OF ST. LOUIS-BASED CARDINAL AIRLINES, CALLED ON POLCOUNS APRIL 26 TO REQUEST HELP IN OBTAINING APPOINTMENTS WITH GOM OFFICIALS WHOSE APPROVAL IS NEEDED FOR LANDING RIGHTS PERMITTING CARDINAL TO TRANSPORT SOME 18,000 UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS FROM CALIFORNIA TO INERIOR OF MEXICO. PRENDERGAST EXPLAINED THAT, WITHOUT GOM AUTHORIZATION, HE WILL BE UNABLE TO PERFORM ON CONTRACT AWAREDED TO CARDINAL BY INS, A CONTRACT WHICH HE SAID STIPULATED THAT ANY SUCH REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS BE OBTAINED FROM GOM BY CONTRACTOR HIMSELF.

2. ACCORDING TO PRENDERGAST, HIS CONTRACT WITH INS WILL LAPSE APRIL 27 UNLESS LANDING RIGHTS ARE CONFIRMED AND AN INITIAL FLIGHT IS LAUNCHED BY THEN. ALTHOUGH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY RUN INTO STUNBLING BLOCKS AT FONSEC(WHERE DEPUTY LEGAL ADVISOR BARONA LOBATO TOLD HIM FLATLY GOM WOULD NOT GRANT SUCH AUTHORIZATION TO U.S. CONTRACTOR), PRENDERGAST SAID THAT MEXICAN CIVIL AIERONAUTICS OFFICIALS HAD PROMISED TO GRANT AUTHORIZATION OVER FONSEC OBJECTIONS. HE HAD THEREFORE TO MEXICO CITY LAST WEEK IN HOPE

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OF NAILING DOWN ARRANGEMENTS--ONLY TO LEARN ORDER HAD

BEEN GIVEN "BY HIGHEST GOMAUTHORITY" NOT TO DO ANYTHING WHICH WOULD FACILITATE MIGRANTS' REPATRIATION.

3. IN LAST DITCH EFFORT TO SALVAGE CONTRACT, PRENDERGAST HOPES TO SEE INTERIOR SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA(BECAUSE OF MOYA'S JURISDICTION OVER IMMIGRATION MATTERS) AND PERSUADE HIM THAT AN INITIAL FLIGHT OR FLIGHTS WOULD BE USEFUL FOR BOTH SIDES AS A MEANS OF TESTING THE REPATRIATION PROGRAM. HE ASKED POLCOUNS WHETHER EMBASSY COULD ASSIST IN SETTING UP APPOINTMENT WITH MOYA.

4. PRENDERGAST CAME ARMED WITH INTRODUCTION FROM SEN. EAGLETON ASKING EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT WITH AMB. GONZALEZ DE LEON OF FONSEC. UNFORTUNATELY, GONZALEZ IS STILL IN U.S., AND IN VIEW OF OUR PURELY SECOND-HAND INVOLVEMENT IN THIS MATTER(AND OF REPORTEDLY NEGATIVE STANCE OF "HIGHEST GOM AUTHORITY") WE DEEMED IT UNWISE TO INTERVENE ON PRENDERGAST'S BEHALF WITH SECRETARY MOYA. POLCOUNS SO ADVISED PRENDERGAST, WHO SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION BUT REMAINED DETERMINED TO SEE MOYA ON HIS OWN. AS PRENDERGAST PUT IT, HE NOW HAS SOME \$32,000 US INVESTED IN THIS CONTRACT AND HAS NOTHING TO LOSE BY TRYING.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS SERIOUS MISGIVINGS ABOUT "DO-IT-YOURSELF" ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH CONTRACT WAS LET BY INS TO CARDINAL, GIVEN EXTREME SENSITIVITIES WITHIN GOM ON THIS SUBJECT AND ADVERSE IMPACT ON US-MEXICAN RELATIONS WHICH COULD RESULT FROM MISSTEP ON PART OF PRIVATE U.S. CITIZEN IN THIS DELICATE DOMAIN. AS DEPT AWARE, AIR TRANSPORT PROJECT WAS ONE WHICH RECEIVED EXTENSIVE (THOUGH INCONCLUSIVE) ATTENTION AT LAST WEEK'S BILATERAL MEETING WITH MEXICANS ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS. CHANCES FOR OBTAINING GOM COOPERATION ON THIS PROJECT COULD BE SERIOUSLY SET BACK IF PRENDERGAST RUNS AMOK HERE--E.G., BY ATTEMPTING TO GREASE WRONG PALMS, BY EMPLOYING CERTAIN "THREATS" WHICH HAD OCCURRED TO HIM(WE STRONGLY ADVISED HIM AGAINST BOTH COURSES), OR EVEN BY ATTEMPTING A REPATRIATION FLIGHT WITHOUT IRON-CLAD APPROVAL OF ALL INTERESTED GOM AUTHORITIES. WE BELIEVE IT IMPERATIVE THAT
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MATTER BE SHIFTED TO GOVT-TO-GOVT CHANNELS IF IT IS TO BE PURSUED. MEANWHILE, WE INTEND TO KEEP HANDS OFF UNLESS AND UNTIL OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED BY DEPARTMENT.
THOMPSON

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